Proceedings of the 4th International Barcelona Conference on Higher Education

Vol. 3. Higher education and gender equity

GUNI - Global University Network for Innovation – www.guni-rmies.net

Gender equity through gender teaching online

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Quotation information
GOROSHKO, Olena (2008), "*Gender equity through gender teaching online*". *Proceedings of the 4th International Barcelona Conference on Higher Education, Vol. 3. Higher education and gender equity*. Barcelona: GUNI. Available at http://www.guni-rmies.net.

Abstract

Gender equity in higher education is more than putting women on equal footing with men. It is eliminating barriers to participation and stereotypes that limit the opportunities and choices for both sexes. Gender equity is about enriching classrooms, widening opportunities, and expanding choices for all students. And I consider that this supposition can be applied not only to the education but all rhetoric of everyday life. Thus, the goal of gender education is not only to provide students with proper knowledge, but deconstruct stereotypes in their thinking and behaviour. Hence, all courses about gender issues must be based on the principle "explain to me – and I will forget; show me - and I will remember; let me participate – and I will understand". The teaching methodology in subject-orientated (gender) class first of all must be targeted at active student-centered learning (learning by doing and changing by learning) (Gritzenko, 2003).

In Ukraine, the issue of getting closer to the international higher educational standards was raised in the late 1990s. It related not only to the courses' content, curricula and syllabi's renewal, but transforming national universities as social institutes on the whole. From 1990s, Ukraine like other CIS's countries faced the necessity of complete reconstruction of the existing educational system, since in the Soviet period, modern western scholarly knowledge and information remained

inaccessible for local academy in many areas. To draw theoretical knowledge closer to practice, strengthen research component in teaching, drastically reconsider national curricula in itself, and introduce alternative ways in teaching and learning were declared as the most important priorities for local tertiary transformation. Probably it was the safest and most effective way to answer properly the challenges invoked by the Bologna process and integrate smoothly into the common educational space of Europe at the beginning of this century.

The paper explores data concerning the shift in students' stereotyping and ways of thinking about gender in everyday life based on the research materials obtained through teaching the course „Gender in Cybersociety".

One can emphasize that the learning objectives of teaching about gender are not only to make students become familiar with theoretical approaches towards gender including gender stereotypes and prejudices but students must use these implications of gendered knowledge towards their everyday experiences. Thus, students will be able to become more competent communicators by gaining increased behavioural flexibility. Feminist methodologists also argue that course goals must be rendered as affective learning outcomes. This supposition provides practical and theoretical foundations for my course portfolio project and the SOTL research paper.

The problem of my current research sounds as: Is it possible to change „patriarchy" thinking and stereotyping through e-learning about gender and how the Net could facilitate this process being simultaneously a subject and object of the course?

The assumption about both gender and cyberspace as social construals provides the theoretical background for this paper. This exploration is aimed towards understanding the ways in which the social constructed cyberspace (within e-learning) as a very specific and not gender-neutral medium can impact and contribute to the construction and deconstruction of gender stereotypes and gendered practices in reality.

One can hypothesize it could eliminate gender stereotypes and attitudes towards gender issues in everyday life.

Under stereotyping one can render always a part of ongoing cultural and social changes and shifting symbolic relations. Stereotyping always operates in relation what

is culturally ambivalent and thematically contrary within everyday life and does so as a common – sense rhetorical strategy of natural order and control as M. Pinckering argues.

I want to ask what a stereotype is, what is gendered stereotype is, what is it consists of and in what ways it can be said, traced, researched and interpreted. This will involve outlining the main ways in which the stereotype and stereotyping processes have been conceived, and highlighting the main problems and shortcomings involved in these processes.

Within feminist paradigm of thinking one can appeal that stereotypes are also part of apparatus of social control. As one follows this way of thinking it is based on the question of order and power. Many social scholars argue currently that stereotyping in itself may operate as a way of imposing sense of order on the social reality practically on the same way as categories, but with one principal difference: Stereotyping takes away any flexible thinking with categories. Pickering asserts that stereotyping denies this in the interest of the structures of power upholding this. According to Pickering the comfort of inflexibility which stereotypes provide consolidates beliefs that existing social relations and power are necessary and fixed (Pinckering 2001, p.3).

Nowadays a great majority of scholars is approaching towards stereotyping as a process for maintaining and reproducing the norms and conventions of behaviour, identity and value. The same approach concerns especially the gender stereotyping. Most gender stereotypes are used to evaluate, control and subordinate women to male power over them. These stereotypes are based on the assumption of comprehensive, naturalized and fixed gender patterns operating as a compelling guide for norms and behaviour, identity, value appropriate to male and female spheres and concepts of normative masculinity and femininity existing in particular cultures. Thus, to trace and study gender stereotypes and the shift in their structures is of crucial importance to create gender-friendly learning environment providing equal opportunities for both sexes.

Social knowledge testifies that one of the most validated and simplest technique to research stereotyping through the study of language consciousness and verbal behaviours. One of the best and widespread methods used to this point is the

research of linguistic consciousness through application of various psycholinguistic tests.

The research design suggests that the group of students taking this course is proposed to go through questionnaire in the form of free associative test at the beginning and at the end of the course teaching. It is the free associative test that is selected as a research instrument since it possesses a good validity and approbation history. It permits to view the covered and subliminal items in our mentality and stereotyping which the other methodology cannot permit to see. It is especially useful to examine naïve consciousness and behaviour concerning sensitive issues (like identity problems, drugs addictions, race prejudices, rapes, etc.). This technique permitting to analyze covered or undercurrent layers in human attitudes and consciousness on the whole makes the change in stereotyping and behaviour more visual in any case. It is also used to provide unbiased and not so „engaged" viewing on gender.

The stimuli list is compiled from the following notions: woman, man, I, gender, Internet, man on the space, woman on the space, sex, student, human being, wife, husband, etc. All data obtained through the testing are classified according to stimuli, genders and time periods (stage 1 and stage 2). Thus, as ten stimuli are used in free association test ten groups of responses are compiled. Then each from ten groups is split according to gender (m/f) and stage (1/2). As a result forty associative fields (as it is called in psycholinguistics) or groups of responses must be obtained for future analysis. This analysis can be supported (in case of need) by other evidences (e.g. students' essays, reflections, etc.) collected also through teaching as an additional qualitative support testifying the changes that could undertake in students' stereotyping and behaviour.

To the most archaic thinking the normal woman doesn't use the Internet for at least two reasons: firstly it is not the same as doing the laundry with Tide Washing Powder or cleaning the toilet bowl with the Comet stuff. It is very, very unwomanly. Secondly, if a normal woman suddenly risks engagement in so atypical an undertaking all the same, she cannot approach the PC since she is afraid of mice. If she is not afraid of mice she is not a typical woman; she is a mutant.
E. Sherman "The Portrait of Cyberwoman or Myth about the Woman in Net"

1. Introduction

The paper explores the shift in students' stereotyping and ways of thinking about gender in everyday life based on the research materials obtained through the MA course „Gender in Cyber-society" teaching in one of Ukrainian universities.

One can emphasize that the learning objectives of teaching about gender are not only to make students become familiar with theoretical approaches towards gender including gender stereotypes and prejudices but students must use these implications of gendered knowledge towards their everyday experiences and thinking. Thus, students will be able to become more competent communicators by gaining increased behavioral flexibility. Feminist methodologists also argue that course goals must be rendered as affective learning outcomes. This supposition provides practical and theoretical foundations for this research.

Organizing this research I can consider as a primary objective to answer the question: "Is it possible to change „patriarchy" thinking and stereotyping through learning about gender and how the Net could facilitate this process being simultaneously a subject and object for the course?"

The assumption that both gender and cyberspace can be rendered as social constructions provides the theoretical foundation for this paper. I would like to emphasize that the possibilities provided by the Net to implement diverse gender practices, impact identity and online behavior are being exploited and grasped by scholars only currently. This exploration is aimed partly towards understanding the ways in which the social constructed cyberspace (within e-learning) as a very specific and not gender-neutral medium can impact and contribute to the construction and deconstruction of gender stereotypes and gendered practices in reality. Or does our virtual reality impact our everyday (offline) life and if yes that in what way? My hypothesis sounds as it would eliminate rather effectively gender stereotypes and attitudes towards gender issues in everyday life.

2. Overview

2.1 Gender

From infancy our culture teaches what it means to be a boy or a girl. From the color of clothes to the toys we play with, the gendered messages begin at a very early age. Young people are influenced by a barrage of messages to conform to a variety of expectations, to buy this widget, and to preserve a rigid set of values that stress the differences between genders. Thus gender is a set of stereotypes. Here as Grace Galliano appeals the emphasis on our beliefs about the characteristics of men and women. These beliefs may or may not be accurate however ' they are incredibly powerful in influencing how we perceive women and men, how we interpret what they do and how we interpret with members of both groups' (Galliano 2003, p.3).

Social psychologists assert that these stereotypes even impact how we perceive and evaluate ourselves (Mitina & Petrenko 2000). A great number of scholars argue that these stereotypes persist in at least five aspects: personality traits, family roles, occupational roles, personal style, leisure activities, and appearances (Ibid). Thus a study of gender is a study of human beings as males and females. Gender is a core structure of internal self-identity, referring to your own sense of who you are. For the vast majority of people gender is an aspect of self and identity that is more profound and stable than any other aspects such as age, race, nationality or social background. Gender is a social category and social identity. It represents the initial and

most basic social learning about what human beings are. Form the point of society gender is rendered as a system of power relations within it. It is an organized system of who leads, determines, controls, makes and changes rules, and who follows, obeys, and affected by the rules and threats made by others (Galliano 2003, p.6). Gender is pervasive in society and operates at multiple levels. Gender shapes identities and perception, interactional practices, and the forms of human organizations and institutions.

In social knowledge the notion gender is coined to delineate all those traits, characteristics and behaviors that are considered appropriate, respectively, for the women and men who are members of a particular society (Unger & Crawford 1998). This notion concerns the diverse femininities and masculinities that characterize particular societies, cultures and social practices. Grace Galliano also considers that these concepts "represent the constellation of behaviors, verbal and nonverbal communications, preferences, concerns, interests, styles, grooming, life goals, and myriad of others that make up a particular society's prescriptions and proscriptions for particular groups of females and males" (Gallaino 2003, p.4-5).

Hence gender can be rendered as a social construction that is related to a biological foundation. Gender presents an ideal dynamic template for what is attractive, desirable, notable, and valuable within oneself and others.

2.2 Gender and Stereotyping

Under stereotyping one can render always a part of ongoing cultural and social changes and shifting symbolic relations. Stereotyping always operates in relation what is culturally ambivalent and thematically contrary within everyday life and does so as a common sense of rhetorical strategy concerning the natural order and control as Michele Pickering declares (Pickering 2001).

In this research I try to define the gender stereotyping within educational paradigm. For doing this first of all I must delineate a number of key concepts: stereotype, gendered stereotype, its basic components. However the basic question is to understand in what ways gender stereotypes can be said, transmitted, traced, researched and interpreted. This will involve outlining the main ways in which the

stereotype and stereotyping processes have been conceived, and highlighting the main problems and shortcomings involved in these processes.

Within feminist paradigm of thinking one can appeal that stereotypes present also part of apparatus of social control. As one follows this way of thinking it is based on the question of order and power. Many social scholars argue currently that stereotyping may operate as a way of imposing sense of order on the social reality practically on the same way as categories, but with one principal difference (Basow 1992; R'jabova 2006). Stereotyping takes away any flexible thinking with categories. However Pickering asserts that stereotyping denies this in the interest of the structures of power upholding this. According to Pickering the comfort of inflexibility provided by stereotypes consolidates beliefs that existing social relations and power are necessary and fixed (Pickering 2001, p.3).

Nowadays a great majority of scholars is approaching towards stereotyping as a process for maintaining and reproducing the norms and conventions of behavior, identity and value (Ivanova 2004). The same approach concerns especially the gender stereotyping. In scholarly knowledge gender stereotypes are considered as descriptions that refer to what members of a particular sex category and/or model of gender expression are believed to be like. Gender stereotypes include "type of dress and bodily adornment, codes of sexual etiquette, styles of self-presentation, patterns of social behaviors, and rules for social interaction in various settings. Gender stereotypes strengthen existing gender differences and hinder from the changes in gender relations.

Most gender stereotypes are used to evaluate, control and subordinate women to male power over them. These stereotypes are based on the assumption of comprehensive, naturalized and fixed gender patterns operating as a compelling guide for norms and behavior, identity, value appropriate to male and female spheres and concepts of normative masculinity and femininity existing in particular cultures (Galliano 2003). Hence gender stereotyping refers to stereotyped images of males and females. Images of males and females are sometimes difficult to see as stereotypes because they are strongly connected with deep-seated beliefs about the roles of males and females in our society. Many people find it disturbing when these roles are questioned. Thus, to trace and study gender stereotypes and the shift in their structures is of crucial

importance to study them through activity, through any processes, including the educational one.

Social knowledge testifies that one of the most validated and simplest technique to research stereotyping through the study of language consciousness and verbal behaviors. Research in this area also asserted that stereotypes are closely – if not inseparably linked to language (Maass and Arcuri 1996). And since any instance of stereotyping uses as its vehicle language or other semiotic structures they also suggest that our knowledge of stereotypes will remain incomplete without an analysis of language and its patterns (Ibid, p.200). One of the best and widespread methods used to this point is the research of linguistic consciousness through application of various psycholinguistic tests.

Scholars also emphasize that to consider how meanings and beliefs about gender are reflected and promoted by social structures and practices it is better to start from the communication as a primary practice. It is the discourse or communication that structures any society from the very foundation (Wood 2003, p.29).

The analysis of the literature regarding gender and communication reveals an interesting, more subtle theme of discussion: the development and perpetuation of gender stereotypes through communication. Most of gender authors conclude their findings with references to gender stereotypes. Still others focus on and detail the way stereotypes affect gender communication. They state that stereotypes are the single most cause of misunderstandings between the genders, e.g. in the work place, especially larger organizations where the work force doesn't have a chance to develop closer relationships (Hayes 2004). Hayes argues that when people are placed in a confrontation with an unknown person, or when that person's mood and attitude is an unknown factor, people fall back subconsciously to their stereotyped images in order to interpret both verbal and non-verbal communication (Ibid). Certain scholars discuss how stereotypes provide the conceptual frameworks built from observable behaviors that act as a way of predicting the world. At the same time the development of stereotypes can lead to situations in which self-filling prophecies rule perceptions (Razumnikova 2002).

2.3 Gender and Computer-Mediated Communication

Historically, few things have so deeply divided humans as the issue of gender. Traditionally, this biological divide has been the basis for the distancing and subordination of women by men. With the exception of radical surgery, there has been no way for women to transcend their gender and interact with their opposites from a position of total equality up to now. The rise of computer-mediated communication (CMC), or text-based communication via computer, has given the rise to a sphere of communication in which participants cannot base their knowledge of each other on physical cues. For the first time, gender could be a non-factor in the flow of discourse between human beings. The number of women using the Internet has increased dramatically. Findings show that the percentage of adult women using the Internet has increased substantially and e. g. in the USA females have been dominating on the Net since 2000 (Wasserman 2005, p.253). It is clear from this tendency that women will have an even greater presence on the Internet in the future, with more and more turning onto the CMC everyday.

The CMC also offers alternative possibilities for interaction between people that sometimes subvert traditional notions of personal and social identity, and the use of CMC in education may also challenge conventional hierarchies and transform educational practices.

Research of CMC reveals that this mode of communication initiates a wide range of diverse texts and discursive practices. Some of them, such as e-mail, electronic discussion list; and computer conference, while they use the written mode, have been found to include some of the features of spoken language (Yates 1996). There are a lot of differences between CMC and FtF (face-to-face) communication. Many of the cues that accompany FtF communication are lost electronically: contributors to an electronic discussion list; chat or forum cannot see the people they are talking to cannot hear the way they speak. As Sheryl Turkle argues “You can be whoever you want to be. You can completely redefine yourself if you want. You can be the opposite sex. You can be more talkative. You can be less talkative. … you can just be whoever you want, really…. You don’t have to worry about the slots other people put you in as much. It is easier to change the way people perceive you, because all they have got is what you show them. They don’t look at your body and make assumptions. They don’t hear your accent and make assumptions. All they see are

your words" (Turkle 1995, p.212). According to Gladis Wee CMC presents „a fascinating extension of the ways in which human beings already communicate. It has the potential to be liberating, and it has the potential to duplicate all the misunderstandings and confusion which currently take place in interactions between women and men in everyday life" (Wee 1993).

However the reality finds itself far more complicated and not so 'liberating'. Practically all gender biases offline have been reproduced rather clearly, regularly and accurately online. CMC offering startlingly new opportunities also raises some rather 'old' concerns about gender differences and inequalities (Blum 1999). At issue in this paper, as electronic forms of communication become more prevalent in education, is whether they are likely to offer a range of alternative positions to both girls land boys; or whether they will reinforce traditional gender inequalities, reversing the trend towards girls' educational and boys' (relative) 'underachievement' as some scholars (Freeman and McElhinny 1996) arguing?

The latest CMC research points to a very disappointing future for the Internet and CMC. It appears that the baggage of the real world, the socialization one all bring to the keyboard, has managed to interject itself into the patterns of CMC discourse, creating a structurally similar online society to the one that was found outside the box. „Women continue to be subordinated, forced to cloak their femininity behind patterns of maleness. They are marginalized, silenced, objectified, harassed, and deceived. Their feelings are cruelly toyed with, and they are worn into a practiced distrust of the male element" (Morahan-Martin 1998).

So then, cyberspace presents partly a gender-based utopia, and CMC doesn't provide a real solution to the problems of gender-friendly virtual surrounding. The patterns touched upon in offline class are still very much alive online.

2.4 Gender and e-Learning

As for gender-sensitive teaching there are a lot of data about gender-biases especially in information- communication technologies (ICT) area. There has been a great deal of research on gender differences in access to and use of computers and more recently of the Internet (Weiser 2000; Ono, Zavodny, 2003; Prino 2003; Kirkpatrick & Li 2004; Herring 2004 - 2008). This body of research is too enormous to be summarized

effectively in one paper, but findings seem to suggest certain consistent trends. Women have more negative attitudes to computers, and have higher computer anxiety than men (Kirkpatrick & Cuban 1998; Comber, Colley, & Dorn 1997; Herring et al 2005). There is abundant evidence that women's use of, and liking for, computer technology is less than that of men (Durndell, MacLeod, & Siann, 1987; Meredith, Helen, & Woodcock, 1998; Brosnan, 1998; Collis, 1985; Frenkel, 1990). Even when given an equal access to computers, women use them less than men do (Shashaani, 1993; 1997; Scragg, Smith, & Geneseo, 1998; Kirkup, 1995).

The Internet has been dominated by males since its inception. Although use of the Internet by females has increased dramatically in the last few years, women and girls in Ukraine still use the Internet less and in different ways than males (Goroshko 2006a; 2006b). Low Internet use by females not only gives them less access to information and services available online, but also can have negative economic and educational consequences (Blum 1999). There are a lot of barriers to greater female use of the Internet: the Internet as new technology, the masculine Internet culture, and gendered communication styles online (Lee 2003). Historically, females have been less likely to embrace new technology than males. Negative attitudes towards new technology underlie females reporting less computer experience as well as less computer competence and less favorable attitudes towards computers than males. Negative attitudes towards computers may be transferred to Internet use and attitudes. The Internet culture was developed by its earliest users, primarily male scientists, mathematicians, and technologically sophisticated computer hackers (Morahan-Martin 1998). This culture can be discomforting and alien to females. For example, netiquette norms tolerate uncensored hostility and even harassment which women may find offensive. Gendered communication differences also affect Internet interactions and lead to male domination found in all internet communicative genres (BBC, discussion groups, chats and even forums (Herring 2000); only in blogs women prevail even in such partriachial cultures as slavic (Blogosphera rossijskogo Interneta 2006; Goroshko 2007) Research generally has shown that males' online communication is status enhancing and adversarial while females' online communication is supportive and tentative (Blum 1999). Further, males dominate mixed-gender online discussion groups, and, when females approach domination, they are ignored, trivialized or

criticized by males. These communication styles may deter greater female participation online.

Cross-culturally, there is also much variation in computer and Internet experience and attitudes. However the gap between males and females in having any computer experience has diminished if not disappeared for all age groups in the United States (Morahan-Martin 1998); however, it is quite strong in other cultures (Weil & Rosen, 1995; Prino 2003). Even in the United States, there are gender differences in amount and types of computer use which may underlie males having higher levels of computer competency and comfort (Schumacher & Morahan-Martin, 1998), while females have higher levels of computer phobias and negative computer attitudes (Herring et al 2005; Herring et al 2008). Research in the USA has found that boys and girls do not differ in having any computer experience or using the computer at home or school, but by the age of seven, boys outscore girls in computer aptitude (Mattel, Inc., cited in Morrell, 1996). Boys spend more time on the computer at home than do girls, and parents buy twice as much computer-related products for sons than daughters (Connell, 1997). Among adults in the USA, the pattern is similar. Men use the computer more than women when work-related word processing and bookkeeping are excluded. Men are more likely than women to own and use a computer at home, to use more computer applications, and to use computers as a leisure activity (Baker, 1994). Compared to females, males of all ages are more adept at activities such as programming and more technologically sophisticated with computers (Morahan-Martin 1998).

The computer culture in itself is also male dominated (Kiesler, Sproull, & Eccles, 1985; Turkle, 1995). Children are 'socialized into a highly gender-stereotyped culture of computing (in which) computer games and educational programs reflect gender biases and stereotypes' (Hesse-Biber & Gilbert, 1994, p. 19). Computer games, considered the channels for initiating and acclimating children to the culture of computers, reflect male themes of adventure, action, violence, sports, and competition (Griffiths, 1993; Kiesler et al., 1985). In the United States, at least two thirds of all computer games are sold to and for boys (DeWitt, 1997). Playing computer games teaches users computer skills at the same time that acclimates one to considering the computer a toy. Both foster greater computer competence. As males are the dominant users of computers, a

stereotypically masculine culture has developed around computer use. This 'masculinization of computer technology' (Hesse-Biber & Gilbert, 1994, p.19) may in turn lead many to view the Internet as a highly technical male domain as well.

Logically, computer experience, skills, and attitudes should affect Internet skills, experiences and attitudes. For both males and females, computer competency and comfort not only predicts computer experience and behavior, but also Internet competency and comfort, experience and behaviors (Schumacher & Morahan-Martin, 1998). A national study in the U.S. of barriers to using the Internet found that the technical logistics of going online was a major obstacle for experienced Internet users as well as those who have never used the Internet. Almost half (48%) said that they had no idea how to use the Internet while 42% said the Internet was too complicated. Gender was a major predictor of Internet usage and attitudes (Katz & Aspden, 1996). A follow up study of those who stopped using the Internet found 18% discontinued because of problems related to using the Internet such as 'it was too hard' (Katz & Aspden, 1997).

Research on adults shows that information technology is found to be male stereotyped. Women are less likely to be attracted to computer courses and to a computer-related career; Durndell and Lightbody's research (1993) shows that this phenomenon has not changed during the last decade, although women have more chance to access computers. A substantial research in this area is also done by the research group headed by S. Herring (Herring at al 2005-2008). Its data based on a Web-based survey of female and male students in computer science and applied IT programs in public U.S. universities reveal that "…while some differences exist between the computer science and applied IT students, especially in their demographics, more differences are due to gender than to major, and these tend to replicate earlier findings for computer science contexts alone. At the same time, women's higher enrollments in the applied programs suggest that they see advantages to studying IT outside a traditional computer science environment, such as the possibility of applying computing knowledge to socially-meaningful work" (Herring et al 2005, p.1). Another their finding with strategy implications is that computer game playing in childhood correlates with choice of an IT education program, providing further impetus for encouraging girls to play with computers. The finding of a link

between computer comfort levels and actual university outcomes (including career choice and advancement) is also worthy as Herring's group argues for further research (Herring et al 2006, p.28). According to this group expert opinion the under-representation of women in IT is a complex problem that is unlikely to be solved by short-term interventions or one-dimensional analyses. Fields such as mentoring, stress, and work-life balance issues represent important areas for future research. Moreover, one of our findings suggests that having a mother working in IT promotes entry of her daughters into IT-related fields; this should be researched further as S. Herring asserts (Herring et al 2008).

Similarly, the other studies have suggested that there are differences in attitudes toward Internet searching and Internet usage patterns between women and men, although women and men have little difference in general attitudes toward the Internet. Ford and Miller (1996) suggest that women were more likely to report significantly greater levels of disorientation and disenchantment in relation to the Internet, compared with their male counterparts. A GVU Centre (1998b) survey also indicated that women had more difficulty and were less confident in finding information on the Internet than men. Morahan-Martin (1998) finds that female students go online less frequently, spend less time per session, and use the Internet for fewer purposes than men. Although, surveys (Wasserman 2005) suggest that there are an increasing number of women going online and that gender gap in Internet use may be narrowing, actual behavior once online e.g., sites 'visited', reasons for searching, the authors would predict, are still gendered (Li & Kirkup 2004). Blum studies 149 messages posted in an online university course, to determine male and female preferred learning styles, and communication patterns and participation barriers, and the findings were in turn compared with results in the traditional face-to-face class on campus. Blum's study shows women experienced more technical barriers and asked more frequent technical questions than men. In general, they had had less previous experience with computers than their male colleagues. The study sites dispositional barriers, which relate to self-perception and confidence, and again refers to the fact that men are more controlling than women, as they tend to dominate the online environment, which, the study says, is not dissimilar to what happens in the class on campus. Tisha Bender summarizing the discussion-based online teaching asserts that her observations from her own

teaching, however, have been different, although she generally has more women than men in most of her classes and she have never found that men dominated the online discussions. Whereas in the traditional classroom, male students sometimes have a tendency to interrupt female students and want to dominate the discussion, Bender predicted and then evidenced that such a thing cannot and does not occur within the elasticity of virtual time in the online classroom, because everyone has an equal and uninterrupted opportunity to respond (Bender 2003). The only area in that male students might dominate, though she conjectures about this with some uncertainty as she has used it less one, is the Real Time Chat feature of the online class. It takes more observations over time to see if there is equality of opportunity for the gender in terms of responses there, or whether this more closely mirrors the behavior patterns of the FtF class. In addition Blum finds that women displayed greater verbosity. Second, the tone is found to be different. Men posted shorter messages, had more certainty and were more likely to do online shouting (using all capitals), tended to use fragmentary sentences, such as "Hey guys. Need help" whereas a woman would be more likely to say, "I would appreciate-some help, if anyone is able to do so. Thanks!" Men were often seen to use more slang, tell more jokes, and be more assertive than men. Women's style of talking was more often personal and related self or family members, whereas men's messages were more impersonal and abstract. Women more often added tags at the end of their sentences, such as "Don't you agree?" If a woman gave advice, she would generally write a follow-up comment to the effect, "I hope that helped." Women are generally more polite, with a frequent "thank you" added to their response. Blum's findings on style of communication are generally corroborated by my observations in the online classes I teach. In general, though, if it is true that women adopt a more personal and possibly helpful tone, then it can be inferred that many of them are involved in building connections, whereas men remain quite separate in their learning. In the women's responses that Blum (1999) analyzes, she determines that they are more empathetic and collaborative, rather than competitive which is more frequently the behavior traits exhibited by men. These trends reflect those of student behavior in the FtF class. This view is also echoed by Kramarae (2001) that CMC is not a neutral medium. Women and men interact in different ways in Internet classes. The patterns from the FtF classroom (including men engaging in more argumentative

conversations and women in more open-ended talks) carry over to the DL format of instruction. Bender also declares that if one can observe the same features on FtF and DL classes it can be inferred that DL possesses a collaborative potential, this can be made enormous use of by female learners who enjoy interaction and sharing as their primary learning style. Any women who initially hampered by low confidence levels in their academic and technical abilities might benefit from having an online mentor or student partner to help them over the hurdles. The online instructor has the job of both encouraging the collaboration between women and the independent work of men. This could be a hard task but it seems that perhaps students in the second half of the semester could be given a project and could choose either to work in pairs or individually. Another important obstacle for learning experienced by women is, as Blum (1999) suggests, "situational barriers." These brought about by the fact that women often shoulder the extra tasks of being the primary caretakers of their children and having greater responsibilities in housekeeping (around the house?).

Despite the fact that online learning provides tremendous potential opportunities for women, Kramarae (2001) mentions that if a class is a hybrid, some women who truly consider their education as a "third shift" might have a hard time completing deadlines or coming to campus meetings in real as opposed to virtual time. It might be supposed that if indeed women are the primary caretakers; these types of constraints of real time meetings might be harder for them than for male students.

Some educationalists and researches also argue that the widening gender gap in information technology can only be closed through concerted educational policy efforts. Previous studies conclude that heightened for example gender consciousness helps female career building. The study conducted by S. Herring and J. Marken focuses on the effects of gender consciousness among students preparing for IT careers in U.S. universities. Based on in-depth face-to-face interviews, researchers evaluate the overall level of gender consciousness among the IT students and identify characteristics of students with high, median, and low gender consciousness. Then they analyze the relationship between level of gender consciousness and students' self-confidence and ambition as regards their education and future IT careers. Their results testify that gender consciousness is connected to students' lived experience, and has positive implications for women's educational and professional success

(Hering & Marken 2006, p.1). The finding that gender consciousness is positively related to student self-confidence and ambition, especially for women, should lead institutions of higher learning to consider incorporating gender consciousness into IT curricula. Just as exposure though coursework to feminism has been found to lead students to a greater appreciation of feminist perspectives (Reid & Purcell 2004), exposure to reflections on the gender gap in computing could raise IT students' gender consciousness. Low gender consciousness serves no one's interests. At the same time, to the extent that male and female students are differently advantaged by high levels of awareness, proposals for such changes are likely to encounter resistance. Educational policy makers should be prepared to defend the benefits of having successful female IT students and graduates, on programmatic grounds as well to promote social justice (Herring & Marken 2006, p.13).

One can add that Susan Stanford Friedman defines the gender-sensitive and gender-consciousness classroom as nonhierarchical, which validates and integrates the personal. It is committed to changing attitude toward women, most particularly women's image of themselves and their potential. This class recognizes that no education is value free and our field operates out of a gender paradigm; analyzes masculine power structures and modes of thought to reinforce the non-hierarchical.

However, the previous research and teaching experience it was found that students resisted democratization—e.g., asked for more lectures in their course evaluations. Students expected high standards and discipline from male teachers but resisted it from women, especially in Gender Studies classrooms. Students wanted nurturance – unconditional - from women teachers (Statham et al 1991). Basing on these data the next problem arose: masculine model of authority is inadequate; but feminine authority is absent. The solution is to dissolve the model of authority that leads to passivity and lack of independent thought in students and develop a feminist model that fuses nuances of nurturance with authority and challenges students to precise and rigorous thought, as well as to synthesize their knowledge.

Frances A. Maher and Mary Kay Thompson Tetrault claim that research shows a failure to engage females in class discussions due to male domination (Maher & Tetrault 1994). They ask: is it the passivity of women, or are female values or ways of knowing - at odds with the assertive, competitive, hierarchical ideology of the

academy? One needs to ask, "What does a woman know? Traditional courses begin not with the students' knowledge but with the teacher's knowledge. We need an interactive pedagogy, a pedagogy which integrates student contributions into the subject matter, just as the subject matter integrates the new material on women. Feminist and liberatory pedagogies' aim is to encourage students; particularly women, working-class students, and members of underrepresented ethnic groups, to gain an education that would be relevant to their concerns, to create their own meanings, and to find their own voices in relation to the material (The Feminist Classroom 1996).

In the upshot practically all feminist educationists stress that gender equity in education is more than putting women on equal footing with men. It is eliminating barriers to participation and stereotypes that limit the opportunities and choices for both sexes. Gender equity is about enriching classrooms, widening opportunities, and expanding choices for all students. And I consider that this supposition can be applied not only to the education but to all rhetoric of our everyday life (Blum 1999).

3. Local Educational and Gender Context

As for the whole higher education in Ukraine the issue of getting closer to the international educational standards was raised in the late 1990s. It related not only to the courses' content, curricula and syllabi's renewal, but transforming national universities as social institutes. From 1990s, Ukraine like other CIS's countries faced the necessity of complete reconstruction of the existing educational system, since in the Soviet period, modern western scholarly knowledge and information remained inaccessible for local academy in many areas. To draw theoretical knowledge closer to practice, strengthen research component in teaching, drastically reconsider national curricula, and introduce alternative ways in teaching and learning were declared as the most important priorities for local academy transformation. Probably it was the safest and most effective way to answer properly the challenges invoked by the Bologna process and integrate smoothly into the common educational space of Europe at the beginning of this century.

The focus on women's and gender issues is of great importance to the developing democracies in the NIS countries, including Ukraine. As in all the countries of the region, there is a close relationship between gender, democratization, and the

developing market economy (Gal & Kligman 2000). The transition to democracy and market economy has been experienced differently by women and men in Ukraine: women have not been equal partners with men in the new political democracy (e.g., they constitute only 5.1 percent of members of the Ukrainian Parliament), and have been disproportionately disadvantaged in the economic market (e.g., comprising up to 80 percent of the unemployed during the 1990s in the Kharkiv region) (Bystydzienski 2003). Ukrainian women are subject to many formal and informal barriers to their political and economic participation, yet there is very little awareness in the country, including in higher education, regarding the conditions and processes that create and maintain gender inequality. Women and men are differently located in the emerging economy (women are found usually in the small-scale, service sector) and are differently imagined as citizens, while politics is being redefined as a masculine endeavor. An important result of continuing disadvantaged position and discrimination against women is the loss of potential talent and human capital to the political institutions and economies in transition to meet the challenges that lie ahead. The depicted course "Gender in Cyber-society" directly addresses the need for development and dissemination of knowledge about gender through curricular transformation in the Ukrainian higher education context. The curricular and pedagogical transformations proposed by gender education are ultimately meant to strengthen and benefit the developing democracy locally. Thus teaching about gender especially in the social, political and economic sciences, education, communication and related fields, will increase the awareness of gender inequality and begin to change discriminatory practices existing in this country. Instituting more active and participatory classroom pedagogies has important implications for the development of a more inclusive and vibrant local democracy.

4. Experimental Design

The research highlights e-learning case study in gender class.

The course "Gender in Cyber-society" targeted at upper BA and MA students. The course explores gender issues on the Net, beginning from the assumption that gender is a social and cultural construct on the base of CMC and Internet practices that prove and expose this assertion very clearly. However, primarily this exposition is aimed

towards the understanding of ways in which the Internet as being very specific and not gender-neutral medium impacts and contributes to the construction of gender and gender identity in our society and provokes simultaneously gender biases in the classroom and beyond. One of the the course objectives is to encourage students to develop their own critical intelligence with regard to culturally inherited stereotypes, and to the images presented on the Internet and modern media. The course is delivered through the last year of learning. It is a 30-hour credit course.

The depicted research classes enroll 78 BA and 26 MA students. Both two classes are proportionally split to genders as two males to thirds females.

The research design suggests that the group of students taking this course is proposed to go through questionnaires in the form of free associative test at the beginning and at the end of the course teaching. It is the free associative test that is selected as a research instrument since it possesses a good validity and approbation history. It permits to view the covered and subliminal items in our mentality and stereotyping which the other methodology cannot permit to see. It is especially useful to examine naïve consciousness and behavior concerning sensitive issues (like identity problems, drugs addictions, race prejudices, rapes, etc). The procedure to use free association test is extremely simple. It requires two participants: one (examiner) whose task is to call out or show single words, and a second (examinee) whose task is to respond to these words with the first word that comes into his or her head. Despite its popular image as a sure-fire way of probing people's innermost secrets, the most striking thing about associations is that they are actually extremely boring and predictable. Korshuk indicates that while given a word like man, 60 or 70 per cent of normal adult native speakers of English will reply with woman. The adjective black produces white and hard produces soft about the same proportion of times. Even relatively unpredictable stimulus like memory or music still produce a very limited range of responses. With a hundred people, one would be likely to get about 25 to 30 different responses, but most of these will occur more than twice, and only a relatively small number will be unique responses. Using bigger groups of subjects does not make very much difference to this pattern; responses tend to stabilize with groups of fifty or more, and using a group very much larger than this makes little difference to the range or pattern of responses. However a great number of psycholinguists emphasizes taht

this technique permitting to analyze covered or undercurrent layers in human attitudes and consciousness on the whole makes the change in stereotyping and behavior more visual in any case. It is also used to provide unbiased and not so „engaged" viewing on gender.

The stimuli list is compiled from the following notions: woman, man, I, gender, Internet, man on the Net, woman on the Net, sex, student, human being, wife, husband, etc. (the total amount includes twenty stimuli). These stimuli are defined as gender marked items. In gender studies a great number of scholars assert that gender is better revealed and researched in contrast situations (Galliano 2003) and in communication and language gender-marked notions show gender peculiarities and biases more deeply, clearly and accurately.

All data obtained through the questionnaires are classified according to stimuli, genders (male and female) and time periods (stage 1 and stage 2). Thus, as twenty stimuli are used in free association test twenty groups of responses were obtained. These groups of responses are defined as associative fields. The associative field is consists of nucleus (the responses which were met than twice in the field) and periphery (single, unique reactions). Then all these twenty fields are split into four subfields according to genders (m/f) and stages (1/2). As a result eighty associative fields are formed for analysis. However, only the most widespread responses (forming the nucleus) are chosen for further research. According to modern psycholinguistic theory namely the associative nuclei represent our thinking, stereotyping and beliefs fairly clearly and accurately (Karaulov, Tarasov, Ufimtzeva 1999).

Thus, the comparative content analysis of associative nuclei obtained is conducted per two control parameters: stage and gender. The gap (time period) between stage 1 and stage 2 covers 3 months. There are no gender classes before in the students' curricula.

This analysis is supported (in case of need) by other evidences (e.g. students' essays, surveys, polls, etc.) collected also through teaching as an additional qualitative support testifying the changes that might undertake in students' thinking, attitudes, stereotyping and behavior through their learning.

One can mention that elearning class on regular base is considered as a community of practice (CoP) setting (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992) on the base of

regular shared learning activity. Goodwin argues that activities rather than cultures or genders, or groups, or individuals should be the basic unit for analysis (Goodwin 1992). Community of practice is defined less by shared space and more by shared practices and activities that contrasted even more deeply online. Focusing on CoP means focusing on the continual mutual construction, contestation and reinforcement of social meaning, identity, and community affiliation, rather than on social identity as something fixed, permanent, stable and given. Virtual reality only deepens this understanding (Gergen 1992-1994; Goroshko 2006).

The particular contribution with a focus on activity as a basic unit of analysis makes to linguistic research on gender as Williams declares that changes and moves from understanding how sex and gender shapes language use to comprehension how and when language use constructs gender differences as a social category (Freeman & McElhinny 2003, p.245).

5. Results and Discussion

For this paper only the fields obtained from several stimuli which depicting the core of gendered CMC activity are selected for future discussion. These stimuli are gender, Internet, man on the Net, woman on the Net, man, and woman. The final number of research fields for further interpretative study is 24 items.

The man stimulus produces the nuclei as:

	Male	Female
Stage 1 (Beginning of Class)	Power, nobleness, woman 11[1]; person – 15; muzhik, strong – 10; power – 4; February 23, friend, loved, competence – 3; handsome, opposite sex, homo sapiens, woman – 2.	Strong – 11; handsome, powerful, authoritative – 9; passionate, confident, father, head, gentleman, person, weakness – 3; tender, glamour media image, defense, friend, torso, hairy, beard, risky, interlocutor – 2.
Stage 2 (Finishing of class)	Person - 15; man - 11; I – 9; programmer, hacker, - 4; user, meat, power, chelovek-razumnij (homo sapiens) – 3.	Man – 15; doesn't exist – 12; personality, strong – 10; handsome, powerful, authoritative - 8, weak, cowed, timid – 5, common interests, he, persona, sadness, sex, half mankind, representative courage, acceptable, independence, nice,

[1] The figure 11 indicates the frequency of responses in associative field or how many times informants react by this response.

		interlocutor, sport, essence, technology, requiring love and respects, clever, clever creation, want to see – 2.

As you see both for males and females man is associated with the concepts of power, authority, and strength. One cannot register the word woman as the most widespread response to the word man according to all associative norms in a number of languages (Goroshko 2003; Korshuk 2006; Postman & Keppel 1970). For women the male image is erotically perceived and attractive (responses: sex, torso, passionate, handsome). It is also connected with typical male social roles in society: father, friend, and gentleman. However women perceive males as weak, tender, cowed and timid creatures. This perception is absolutely alien to patriarchy consciousness and probably indicates certain gender shift in local female mentality.

The impact of learning is also exploited into responses concerning IT area: programmer, user, hacker, technology, and for males IT activity probably means more than for females (judging to the number of IT responses namely in stage 2 male associative field).

The word-combination man on the Net initiates such thread of responses as:

	Male	Female
Stage 1 (Beginning of Class)	Man - 11; person - 15; I - 9; geek, guru – 8; programmer, hacker, manager - 6; user - 5; Besos, Gates, Dell – 3; meat; power - 2,	User - 12, hacker - 10, functioning - 7, acquaintance - 6, play - 4, contact - 4, business - 3, programmer - 3, solid - 2, curiosity - 2, searching for - 2, professional - 2, sport - 2, clever - 2, scientist - 2,
Stage 2 (Finishing of class)	Personality – 11; man – 10; aitishnick (IT-man) – 9; virtual, offline – 8; geek, user – 7, netizen – 6; surfer, guy – 4; clever, netter, analyst, information, ICT – 3	ICQ – 14; manager, address, businessman – 12; all, is threatened, money, amusements - 10, friend, ninny, connoisseur, pervert, interesting – 5; corona, brevity, leader of the enterprise, logistical, music, stranger, monkey - 3; work; Internet, inhabitant, office, first, lost soul for society, power, sites, standard, terror, finance, photo, admin, peddler virus, skinny – 2.

A man on the net is rendered by both sexes first of all as an IT person (programmer, netizen, surfer, user, geek, guru, and netter). Also for males this image is personally painted and associated directly with real IT geeks as Michelle Dell, Bill Gates, or Jeff Besos. One can trace a slight gender bias between male and female responses: For males this image is rendered as a spiritual entity (person, personality, and analyst) and for females it is perceived more pragmatically (from the business point of view) (business, manager, connoisseur, businessman, leader of the enterprise). It is peculiar that namely female students after learning begin to associate the man on the Net functionally (through communication via the Internet) since the word ICQ rates the highest score. Also female associative fields (in independence from the stages of learning) contain much more different responses. It can indirectly show more strong interest concerning this notion.

The noun woman engenders such responses as:

	Male	Female
Stage 1 (Beginning of Class)	Woman - 11; love – 7; girl; beauty - 5; the girlfriend - 5; the user - 5; apron, beautiful - 4; the mother - 4; tenderness; she - 3; person, Vau!, in apron, bosom, the other sex, children, wife of the programmer, drolly; acquaintance; lady, girl, not man; not I; the contact; the beautiful; female cracker; want; the 8 of March; the buttocks - 2.	Beautiful – 16, man – 13; I – 8, tender – 5, beauty, harmony, soul, nature, mother, programmer – 3, FEMALE, goddess, kindness, hard, anxiety, sunburn, the classics, queen, lady-cat, literature, love, wise, softly, knows nothing and does not can it to defend the interests, a friend, half, attractive, gladness, different interests, independent, freedom, family, force, weak, sweet, interlocutor, an aggregate for housekeeping, slender, clever and beautiful creation, comfort, keeper of hearth, thin - 2.
Stage 2 (Finishing of class)	Girl – 12; beauty – 11; femininity love, grace - 10, refinement – 10; opposite to man, bitch, whore, online love, lover, cyber-sex, sex - 4, screw, tenderness, love, mother – 3 requiring love and respect, personality, girlfriend - 2.	Beautiful – 12; person – 11; power – 8; independence, struggle, love, gender, authority, career – 5; I - 4, March 8, ma, gentile, tenderness, friend, handhold, tender, man, lad – 3; beard, adult, high, crudely, friends, woman, protection, familiar, interest, art to live, complex, beautiful, small, model, my man, youth, being clever, husband, courage, low, independence, need, charm, ape – 2.

As one can see female image is closely related with beauty, femininity, love, sweet and refinement. It is tender, harmony and grace. Thus the concept of beauty occupies the primary position in female image structure and perception. Men think women require love, respect and esteem. Probably it is right. This image is family-orientated (in spite of the male one) testifying again the key role of woman in the family setting particularly within local culture (children, wife, mother, household, aggregate for housekeeping). Females perceive this image more positive and after learning one can see a slight shift towards more active-builder position in the society (power, person, struggle, independence, career, authority). As for male reactions they are more negative and erotically colored in all stages (drolly, screw, cyber-sex, bitch, whore). Judging to the responses collected it is difficult to speak about the shift in male thinking and perception about women after the course alas.

The phrase woman on the Net generates the nuclei as:

	Male	Female
Stage 1 (Beginning of Class)	Virtual lady – 12; virtual reality – 10; all, worldwide web, global network, blue sky, girl living on the net, deal, business – 8; acquaintance – 6, user – 6, monkey with a grenade –5, porno site – 4, beauty – 3, lamer – 3, intercourse – 3, picture, looser, well and that, gladness, interlocutor, super, photo, boat, information – 2.	Information - 14, user - 11, network - 9, acquaintance - 6, worldwide network, contact, interesting - 4, relationship, user, knowledge, www, beginner (perception), rate, general network, fine, is spoilt, counterweight to man, advertisement, drawings, site, secretary, system, bored, reference, photography, want anything see, chat, me.
Stage 2 (Finishing of class)	Embarrassment, blondie - 10, Masjanja, desperate – 9; signifier, not quite blunting, intellectuals, computer – 8; female sites, love online, sex, ugliness, beautifully, cooking, curiosity – 6; much information, model, tenderness - 4, irreplaceable, chat, forum - 3, no associations, hopelessness; despair – 2.	Business woman - 10; explorer – 9; big volume of information - 8; quickly, in most cases lamer, merrily, bloger – 7; virtual, virtual reality - 6, all, worldwide web, global network, blue skies – 7; girl on the network, deal, business, beast, Zemfira – 4.

One can see a huge gap between perceptions of real and virtual woman by both sexes. Woman on the Net doesn't need to be beautiful or take care of her family. It is professionally-orientated image connected with IT area: information, www, explorer, business woman, computer, network, bloger. For males this image is rendered even

through the naïve virtual archetypes and consciousness: blondie, virtual lady, female cracker and Masjanja (Sherman 2003a, 2003b). However even within IT sector females are rendered sexually as desired erotic objects (intercourse, love online, porno site). There is no shift towards more positive women's perception by both sexes and male attitude towards female PC user is much more negative (despair, ugliness, embarrassment) and after the course this perception has only deepened! This fact has not been predictable before either developing or teaching the course and contradicted the previous research data (Herring & Marker 2006).

The Internet stimulus evokes the responses as:

	Male	Female
Stage 1 (Beginning of class)	World - 24, sex - 8, not real - 8, play - 6, unrealistic - 6, contact - 6, computer - 5, internet - 3, information - 3, nonexistent - 3, Gazonokosilischik - 2, unrealistic - 2, reality - 2, comfort - 2, piece - 2, host, www.	World – 17, information – 16, computer – 7, communication – 7, unreal – 5, network – 5, game – 4, unattainable – 4, not real – 3, Internet – 3, reality – 3, not living, connectivity, connection – 2
Stage 2 (Finishing of class)	World, cyber-community - 14, virtual, porno, movie - 10, RSS, geeks, society, communication - 8, information, message, global, global village, viruses global access to information – 7; available, accessibility, acquaintances of the knowledge - 5; awareness, interest, interesting information – 4; instant access, online, chat – 3.	Communication – 20; chat, forum, blogging - 15, virtual reality, surfer, friend - 12, marriage, virtual love, virtual marriage - 8, seek, weather, partner – 6; global, husband – 5; gender, me on the net, second life, clever, career, no practice – 2.

First of all judging from these associative fields obtained the Internet is perceived currently as a communicative space for socializing. It is a special world - a global village for communication. Internet is considered through motivations by its users and their purposes. Internet is for blogging, marriage, sex, chat, movie, etc. Socializing, access to new sources of knowledge, and business transactions become priorities for Internet users. Nevertheless, it is the communication that women seek on the net. An observation that is borne out by this research corresponds to social psychology data

that linking the notion of happiness directly with communication but does so only for women (Il'in 2002, p.178). There is no such correlation for male stratum. Men also communicate in 1,5 less than women do (Bodalev 1983).

The gender word begets the nuclei as:

	Male	Female
Stage 1 (Beginning of class)	Sex – 6, something new - 5, subject - 4, idea – 2, no responses – 30.	Sex - 10, something new - 9, equity - 2, behavior – 3, no responses – 40.
Stage 2 (Finishing of class)	Sex - 14, philosophy - 5, scholar - 5, teaching, social construct, behavior - 4, nonsense, allergy, female slowdown - 3, no responses – 10.	Sex - 10, conventions - 6, genes in blood - 4, behavior, equity, development, consistent, balance, power - 3, career, weakness, stereotypes, bias, rules, our teacher – 2; no responses – 5

As one can judge from the very beginning the gender is an unknown notion – a certain enigma - both for male and female students. Primarily it is associated with the sex of person. One can see both female and male responses don't diverse and there are a lot of rejections to give responses indicating indirectly the lack of either interest or knowledge to this entity.

After finishing the course one can see that the gender first of all is associated with the sex both for males and females (the word sex rates the highest score). It is interesting that after the study gender is viewed more positively by females. For males this notion is scholastic and sounds academically and sometimes negatively (nonsense, allergy, female slowdown). For females one can trace a slight empowerment in their responses. For them gender is dealt with career, equity, development and genes in blood. That is good. One can see that after teaching namely for girls gender becomes more positive, useful and necessary category for their thinking and behavior.

To draw a conclusion one can assert there are strong gender stereotypes prevailing both in local mentality and academy. The research reveals a paradoxical situation: gender-teaching online only eliminate or shift gender stereotypes among females. For males all gender teaching invokes the opposite negative reaction deepening the patriarchic thinking and behavior. And the Internet only accelerates

these processes in both directions. However female stereotypes change more quickly than the male ones. This result supports the previous research data obtained by O. Razumnikova (2002).

6. Limitations

This research possesses a number of limitations. However, this is the size of sample presenting the main one. Future research on gender stereotyping on the Net is needed to analyze more deeply the problem of stereotyping in a nutshell and ways and conditions providing stereotypes' circulation and steadiness.

Many unanswered questions remain about the Internet and how it will be used in the future. As next generation of researchers plan their studies, they are urged to consider the impact of gender and culture since according to cross-cultural research of female gender behavioral stereotypes in Russia and USA a huge gap in data is fixed (Mitina & Petrenko 2000).

As Internet use expands throughout the world, research will be needed to clarify culture specific patterns of behavior and their linkage with gender stereotyping.

There is a time factor that presenting as I think the major difficulty. The stereotyping is a rather slow mental and culturally-stipulated process requiring much more time to its shift or change. The longitudinal observations are required to trace the stereotyping processes deeply across the Net and cultures.

It may be useful also to examine the impact of all aspects of stereotyping formation (the impact of culture, social background, ethnicity, age, etc.) through the use of more qualitative and quantitative approaches basing on ethno methodology and statistics analysis' use. This may be the more effective way for understanding the complex processes underlying the formation and circulation of gender stereotypes on and offline.

7. Summary

From infancy, our culture teaches what it means to be a boy or a girl. From the color of clothes to the toys we play with, the messages begin at a very early age. Young people are influenced by a barrage of messages to conform to a variety of expectations, to buy this widget, and to preserve a rigid set of values that stress the differences between

genders. The world of make believe as it is presented on modern media including the Net has a big effect on the user. Even though the reality is virtual, constructed and sometimes fictitious, the underlying attitudes, believes, and symbolic messages constituting the core of any stereotypes are not. They communicate cultural and gender values, which shape the way we think and the way we interact. Understanding this, it is important to begin to unmask a double standard that is pervasive in our culture. The dichotomy is that we buy into the stereotypes that reinforce abuse, while trying to "root out" violence in our community. In order to combat this destructive hypocrisy, students must begin to ask questions, rather than passively accepting whatever they observe. Recognizing Internet myths for what they are is a good first step. The objective here is to draw a thick line between the stereotypical behavior of all modern media (including CMC and Internet), on the one hand, and our own lives, on the other.

The preliminary analysis of learning data shows that the formation of a new gender paradigm is under way – with its own history and ideology, values and strategies. At the same time the local learning gender paradigm is developing in three directions:

- accentuation of in-born differences between women and men;
- construction and circulation of feminine and masculine images in cyber society, which extend outwards from the Internet world;
- Development and intensive promotion of gender stereotypes and images based on a set of traditional ideas about male and female social roles and behaviors.

One can consider these trends as developing simultaneously.

Meanwhile it is the ordinary thinking, which doesn't incline too much to pure theorization that most effectively characterizes the state of society. The Net illustrates this brilliantly, with a habitual Net-user living with these accursed gender stereotypes. He doesn't swap gender very well and smoothly. The stereotype exists to harness our unruly reality. The myths that "men know the PC better" or "A woman-hacker doesn't exist at all" serve to reinforce feelings of male superiority. However, the stereotype is short lived and alternative thinking can quickly oust the current stereotypes. "It is naïve to think that, as soon as we are able to expose these damned stereotypes everything will be OK and a new life will begin, where all are equal. Nonetheless, I consider reality

more complicated. If we face the replacement of cultural epochs (this is quite likely) the new set of stereotypes, including the gender ones, will form the base for the future society but they will be simply the alternative" (Balla 2005).

In virtual reality, where everything is changing much more quickly, the shift and circulation of stereotypes also adjusts swiftly. The development of the Net can be a predictor for one of the possible changes in local society as a whole.

But this is only one prediction from a great number of alternatives and the Internet proved to be an effective tool to explore gender stereotypes, believes and identities rather quickly.

And answering to the question posited by me for the title to this paper "Is it Possible to Change Patriarchy Consciousness and Stereotyping through E-learning?" one can say that "yes" only if the gendered learning will be introduced not only at the course but also at the curricula levels. A complex approach must be developed concerning the assessment of the whole university curricula from the point of feminist pedagogy and gender studies.

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